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**CONSOLATORY
VIEWS OF DEATH.**

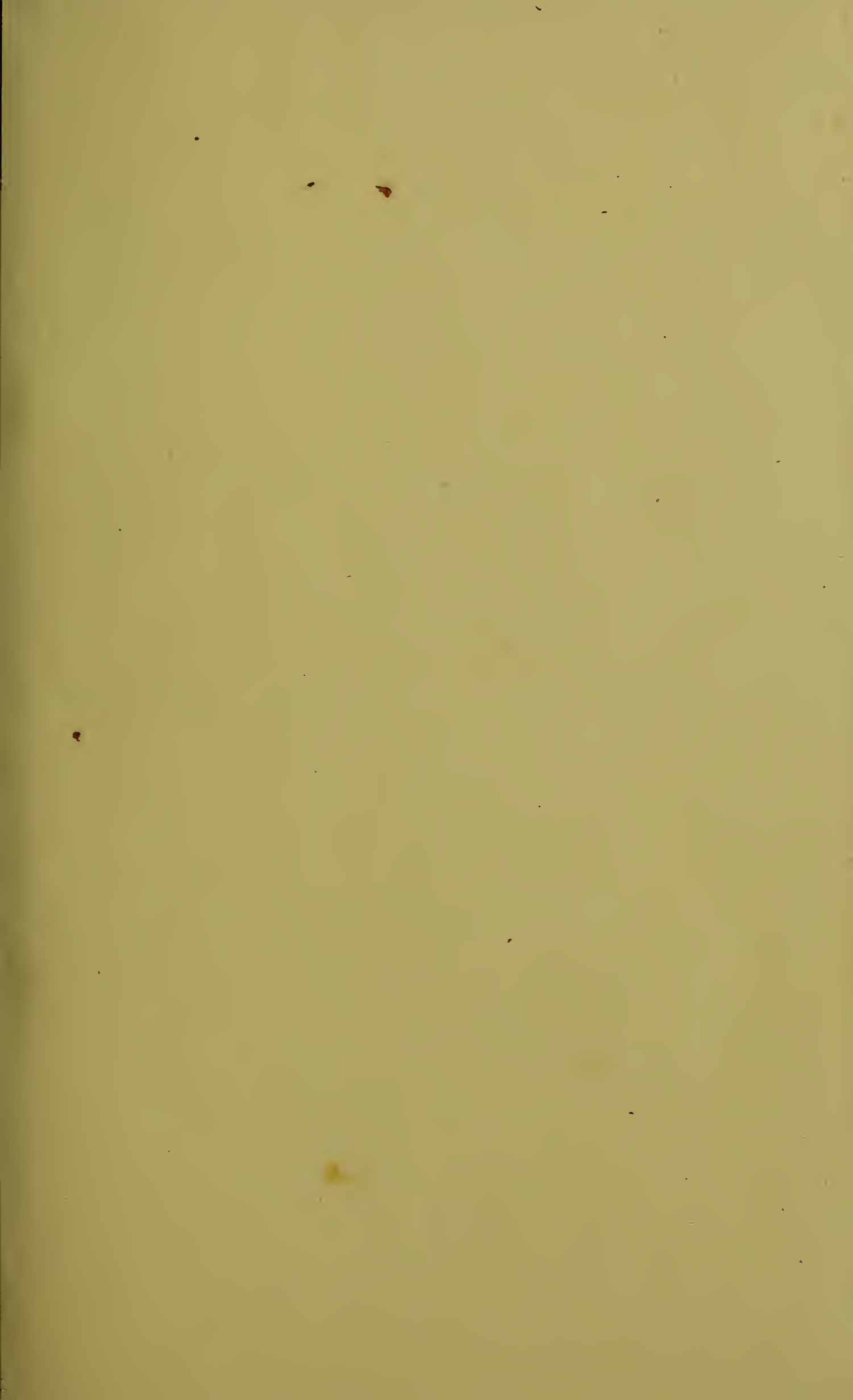
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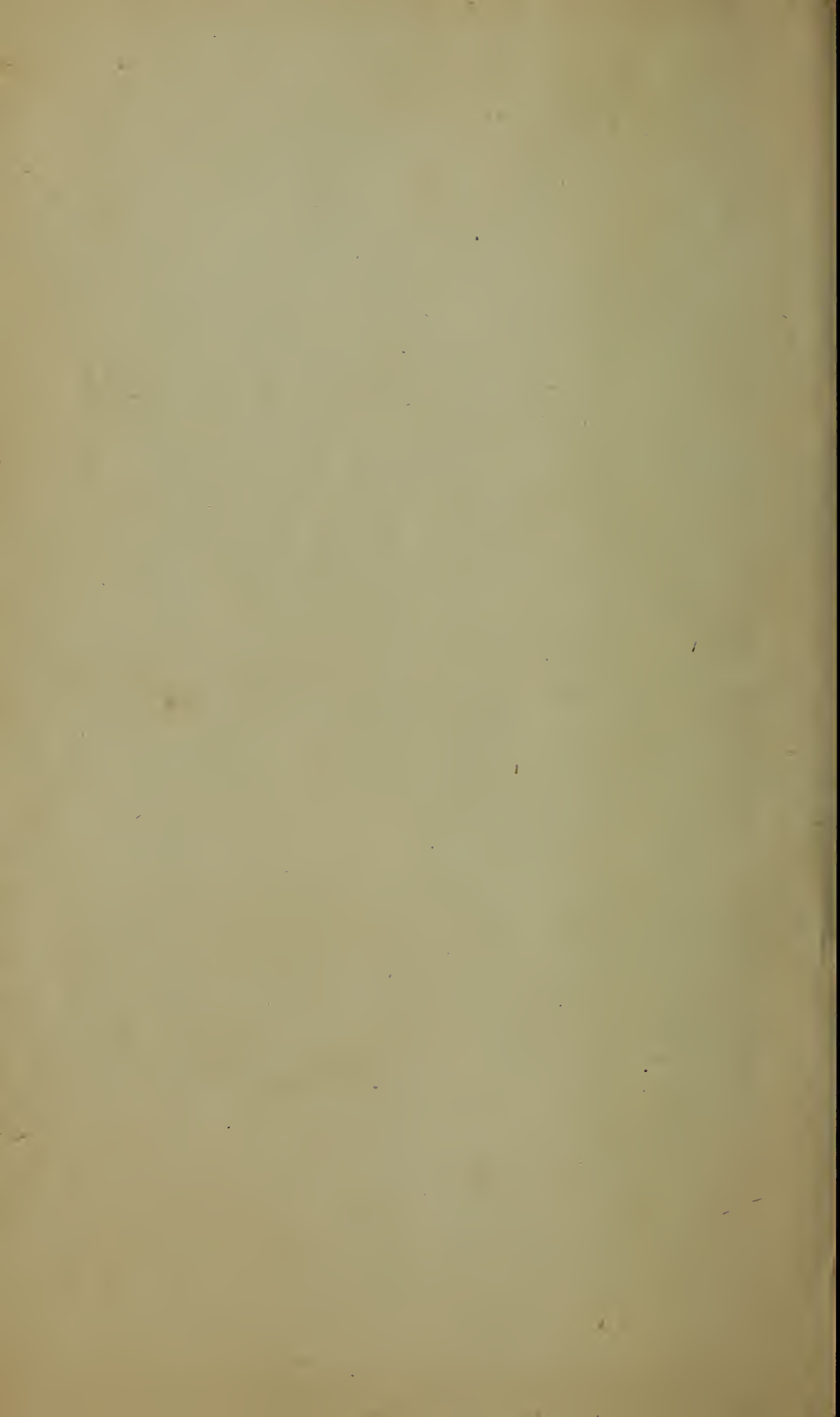
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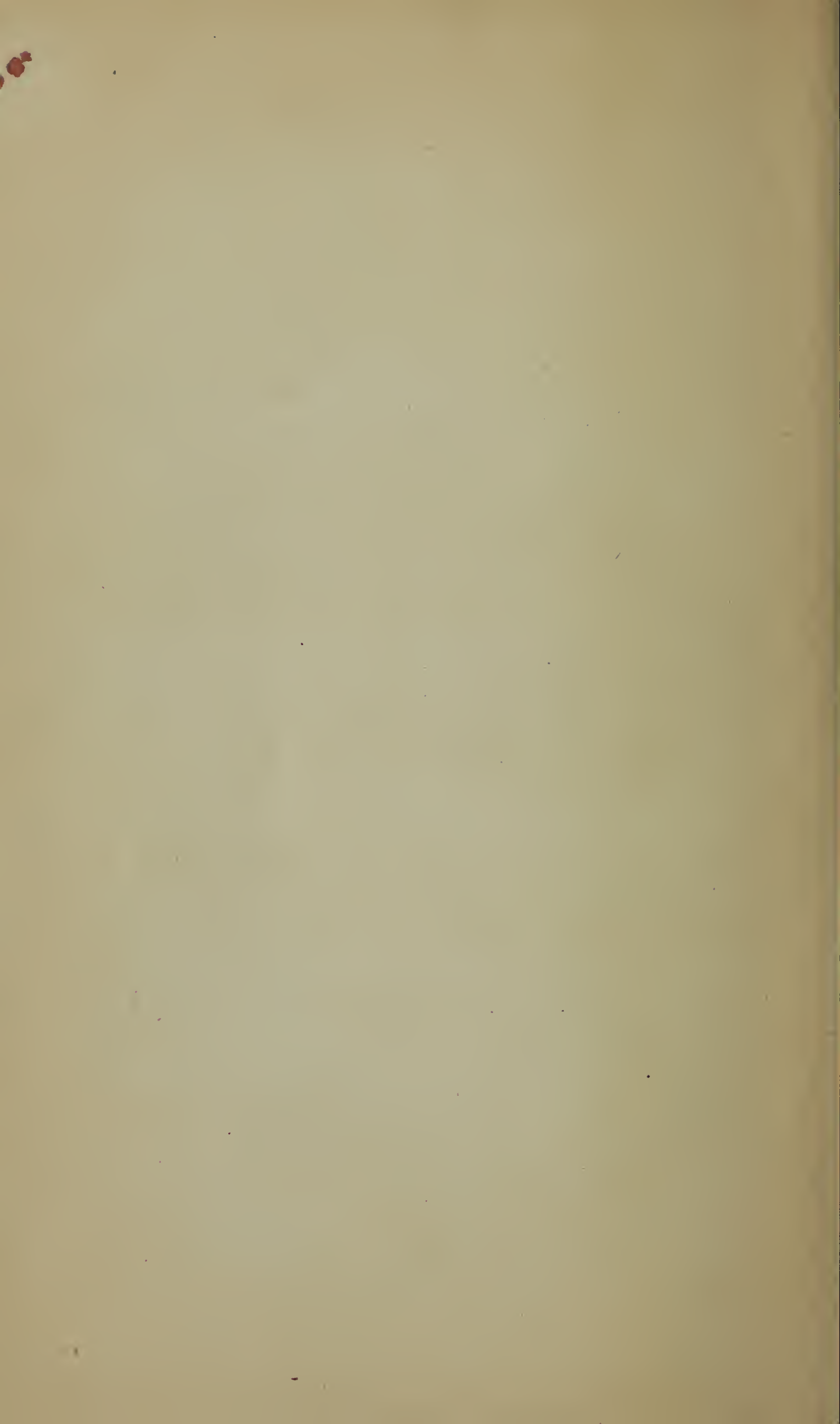
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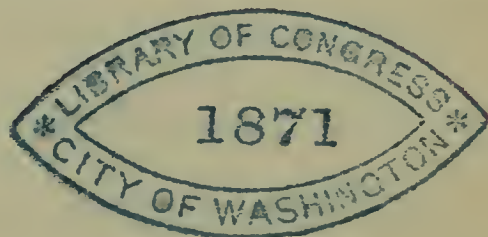
A FRIEND UNDER BEREAVEMENT:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SOME PRAYERS IN AFFLICTION.

BY

HENRY COLMAN.



BOSTON:

A. D. PHELPS, 124, WASHINGTON STREET.

1844.

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PREFACE.

THE following Tract presents views on the subject of Death, different from those which are generally received; but which will not, I hope, on that account be considered the less just and true. They are offered to the public without any thought to give offence to those who differ in opinion from the writer, and with no wish to make others proselytes to his notions, farther than they accord with reason and truth. One of the highest duties of the human understanding is, "to vindicate the ways of God to man." Whatever obscurity to our narrow views may hang over the dispensations of the Divine Providence,

we may feel sure that they are all consistent with infinite wisdom and benevolence. Let us have the courage then to reject any and all doctrines which serve no other end than to stamp his government with the worst features of an arbitrary and unrelenting despotism; nor ascribe to Him, the all-holy, purposes and measures which would be deemed libellous, if applied to any human sovereign; nor have a doubt that the perfection of benevolence must predominate throughout the works and dominion of a Being whose nature is love itself. The world in which God has placed us is everywhere radiant with the beauty of his goodness, and flooded with the outpourings of his love. There are objects of suffering to give us pain; and moral anomalies, which it may be difficult satisfactorily to explain; and evils, which sometimes alarm and shock us; but why should we be inclined to multiply these evils and difficulties by a system of theology which presents every thing in a distorted light;

and would narrow down the works and purposes of God, to the low standard of human weakness and passion. These mean notions, in my humble opinion, spring in a great measure out of a literal interpretation of early and obscure traditions, which, on whatever authority they may be supposed to rest, are obviously in the highest degree allegorical, and admit to the mind, which has the courage to rest upon its own conclusions, of no other construction. The tendency of such notions is to dishonour God, and to fill the mind with anxiety and distress. The sole object of the annexed Tract is to place some portion of this great subject in a more just and rational light; and to pour hope and consolation into the heart, bleeding under the breaking off of those affections and attachments, which constitute in so great a measure the delight and charm of our earthly existence. Some friends, in whose judgment the writer feels a strong confidence, thought its publication would, in some degree,

answer these ends; and that it might be useful as a present to persons suffering under the bereavements of Death. In compliance with their wishes it has been printed.

June, 1844.

CONSOLATORY VIEWS OF DEATH.

DEATH is always a great event; it is great in respect to the individual who falls under the blow, and also in respect to those to whom he or she was an object of interest, affection, or even of common intercourse and acquaintance. The birth of a child is a great event. The mother forgets her agony in her joy that a child is born into the world. A flood of new affections rises in her heart, and they pour themselves out over this new idol, like sparkling and gushing waters from a boiling spring. Gilded visions of future years, of future honours, attainments and usefulness, of bright talents which lie enclosed in this casket, yet to be developed, and of successes and achievements which are to reflect their lustre upon a parent's name, and pour joy into a parent's heart, play round the imagination. But here, bright as the prospects may be, or uncertain as they may be, the objects lying before us are defined; we have had expe-

rience of life; we know what we may expect. Even when passed under favoured and auspicious circumstances, we know the extent of its goods, the value of its pleasures, the nature and worth of its attainments. We know, likewise, what its dangers and trials are, and what its sufferings may be. The chapter of human experiences is read to us, and by us, daily and hourly. Our own history makes a portion of it. We know the vanities and vexations of life; we have seen again and again the end of what men call perfection here below. When a child therefore enters the world, we know what it may enjoy, suffer, attain, accomplish. In a word, we know what human life on earth is. It is different when an individual dies. They retire from our intercourse; we do not know what has become of them; where they have gone; where they are. They have launched into what to us is a fathomless and shoreless ocean. No mortal line has sounded its depths; no human eye has explored its wide waste. An impenetrable darkness hangs over it. The appearances of death are all astounding. Whether the blow falls suddenly, and the light is extinguished by a single blast; or whether it appears loth to quit its hold, and is seen a long time quivering in its socket, sometimes in its fitful changes seeming

to have expired, and then rekindling and shedding its flickering rays about the room; yet when it does go out, the change is the same—the darkness is equally intense.

There lies that which was once full of life and activity, buoyant with health, strong in muscular energy, moving with celerity, commanding its own limbs, quick in its perceptions, ardent in its pursuits,—its eyes lit up with the sparkling fires of wit and genius, and its bosom swelling with lofty purposes and with generous affections; an object to wonder at, to doat upon, to love, to reverence—I had almost said to adore—for it bore the image of the Creator; and in what earthly object are his perfections so vividly displayed. The frost of death touches it—its leaves drop off—its stem falls to the ground,—it is crushed and withered. Where life was there is now death. What a change! The ferocious conqueror, the hero of a hundred victories, lies there; his sword has fallen, his unclenched hand rests powerless by his side, and a child may beard him now. The eloquent orator, upon whose voice listening senates hung with rapture, and whose words fell upon their hearts like liquid fire kindling an instant flame, lies speechless there. The philosopher, whose capacious thoughts held high converse continu-

ally with the heavenly worlds, who essayed to hold the mighty elements of nature subject to his command; his wisdom, his knowledge, his power avail nothing here,—his empire is over; the sceptre of art, learning, and skill lies shattered; the glittering plumes of his boasted wisdom are plucked from his crown, and the clown may now point at him the finger of scorn.

There are objects still nearer and dearer to us than these. The parent hugs the loved but lost child to his bosom, ere the fading tints of life, lingering like the last rays of twilight, have gone; but the strongest pulsations of his heart kindle no kindred warmth. There is, perhaps, another object before you, so lately active, busy, cheerful, kind, useful; the light of your dwelling, the revered centre of fond affections and kind and willing services; the faithful counsellor; the true heart which never would betray you; the disinterested friend, whose life would at any time have been offered a willing sacrifice for your life or your happiness—the wife—the mother; the wife, what a wife should be; the mother, what a mother can be; there she lies, reposing in her last sleep, to wake on earth no more. Put your hand upon that forehead, how cold and icy it seems. Press that hand once more, it returns no token of recognition even to the

tenderest conjugal affection. Speak to her, "Mother, dearest mother, answer me but a single word,—look upon me! O give me one more parting glance." But the eye is closed; and the ear that before was never deaf to the softest whisper of her child's desire or sorrow, could not hear now even the cannon's roar. There, indeed, this loved object lies—motionless, deaf, sightless, speechless, with every sense departed, and waiting only to be put away for ever!

The mind is confounded, and the heart is ready to burst with grief, under the painful spectacle which presents itself; and when, under such circumstances, in the bitterness of our grief, and under the amazement of the change which death produces, and with an impatience of curiosity growing out of the depth and strength of our bleeding affections, we inquire how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come, St. Paul calls us fools,* the language seems too severe. It appears harsh, and without due compassion for the weakness of poor human nature.

If such inquiries imply any distrust of the power of God to do what He will, or of his wis-

* "Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die."—1 Cor. xv. 35.

dom in all the arrangements of his providence to discern the best ends and to adopt the best method for their accomplishment, or of his benevolence to provide for the true welfare and happiness of his creatures, this scepticism would be not merely folly but madness. Perhaps this is what the Apostle intended. But if he would censure us for the sadness which overwhelms us under a dispensation so mysterious as death, under the doubts and difficulties and painful yet affectionate queries which force themselves upon us, and wring the heart with anguish, his judgment is hard; and he makes no allowance for our humble faith; how humble and how imperfect, compared with that which beamed upon his rapt spirit in light directly from heaven, "above the brightness of a meridian sun." Would to God that we could have some measure of this triumphant faith to sustain us under the bereavements of death, which are frequent in early life; and the tidings of which, as we pass within the boundaries of age, seem borne upon every breeze, and strike the ear in almost as rapid a succession as the strokes of the passing bell! But let us look at this subject more closely, and see where we can find support, and where we can find hope, if there is any support and any hope to be found.

The first light or aspect under which death presents itself to a reflecting mind, is as a law of our being, and consequently as a divine appointment. It is not an accident; it is not a sort of second thought on the part of the Creator, and a circumstance appended to our being after our creation. Mortality forms as much a part of our nature as vitality. It is supposed that in the patriarchal ages men lived much longer than they now do, the ages of some of them extending through centuries. If the years of their calendar were the same as ours, and if there be no error in the reckoning, they must have attained to a remarkable longevity. It is not certain, however, that this was the case; and it is now a question beyond being determined. It is understood that the Arabs of modern times live to a very advanced age. Climate, diet, habits of life, all at that time, and now, affect the duration of life. But sooner or later death comes, and comes wherever there is life. All that are born must die.

Man follows this great law of animal life, which may therefore be pronounced universal. In ordinary cases, and when not cut off by accident or disease, he attains his growth like other animals, by gradual progress, and then immediately begins to decline. No art or skill

can evade this decline, or prolong his life beyond its natural term. In this he does not differ at all from every other being which has life.

It is the same throughout all nature. If we go into the forests, we behold there a picture of human life. There are the tender plants just starting above the ground; there are the young trees with their smooth bark and bright foliage in the full vigour of growth; there are full-grown trees in the perfection of life; there are those whose bark is rough and wrinkled, whose limbs are many of them broken, whose foliage has become thin and imperfect; there are others with the roots partially upturned, perhaps leaning against and sustained by others, with here and there a few green twigs indicating the last struggling efforts of life; and then everywhere upon the ground are scattered the mouldered and mouldering remains of many generations which have fallen, and are becoming again the nutriment of younger and new life.

In the brute creation, or in what may be called the kingdom of instinctive and irrational life, the same law of death prevails, modified by a system of universal prey. A large portion of the animal creation are supported by vegetable life; but a much larger subsist upon each other, and live upon the blood and flesh of other

tribes. Man himself is an animal of prey, and the most rapacious and indiscriminate of all others. Here then, likewise, the law of death prevails universally; and though in such cases life seems often prematurely cut off, yet let the animal be ever so strongly protected against injury or assault, by no possible art or skill can life be extended beyond its natural term.

Let me say a word here upon this curious fact in animal life. The system of prey which prevails in the animal creation has been deemed to militate against the Divine benevolence. If the brute animals had the same sensibilities as the human, it would, indeed, be a dreadful state of existence to them—full of fear and full of wretchedness. But they are without reflection, and have probably no more fear of death than is sufficient to induce them to provide for their own subsistence, and to guard against ordinary perils. It seems, then, a benevolent arrangement on the part of the Creator, that He has made even the food upon which animal life is sustained itself animated; multiplied its existence under infinitely varied forms of beauty, and endued it while living with the capacity of perfect enjoyment.

Death, then, is the universal law of animal existence. It must be, therefore, the appoint-

ment of the same wisdom, and the same benevolence, which gave life; and if life is a blessing, as flowing from the Divine love, death itself must be also a blessing, for the same fountain does not send forth sweet water and bitter.

Some persons choose to consider death as a curse from God. What a darkness and a horrible gloom does such a conception at once bring over the mind! But it cannot be. Why should God curse his works; why should he create such beings as we are, only to be miserable? If we could imagine an earthly despot, out of pure vindictiveness, or because some one of his poor subjects had offended him, therefore cursing the guilty, and cursing the innocent, and pouring out an eternal curse of misery upon their bodies and souls, the houses in which they dwell, and every object which their eye covets, and every spot of ground which their foot treads upon,—then we should have an idea of the God whom some men worship; and whom, strange as it may seem, they call upon us to praise for His mercy. Let us thank Heaven that a better light has dawned upon our minds:

All this grows out of and makes a part of a system of theology, which, notwithstanding the eminent moral worth of many persons who

receive it, seems to me so inconsistent with all just and reverential sentiments of the Deity, that I do not deem it worth while to examine its pretensions. Death was in the world before man was in the world. Various kinds of vegetables, and various races of animals, as the discoveries of geology fully prove, flourished and perished before man was upon the earth; and many of these races have become extinct. If death came as the punishment of sin, it seems unaccountable that whole races of animals should have perished before man existed; and that it should appertain as much to the brute and the vegetable tribes, as to the human race.

If we look at the constitution of man, every one must see that the human frame was not made to endure for ever; and that, like all other classes of animated beings, man has his growth and his decline. It is a universal law of being, that life on earth, let it exist under what form it may, should have its measured term, the conclusion of which may, in various ways, be anticipated, but can in no case be avoided. So far from being a curse, therefore, I believe as much as I live, that death is an appointment of the Divine benevolence; for so predominant are the Divine goodness and love throughout the whole creation, that there can be found no

universal law, principle, or arrangement, whose end is evil, or only to produce pain or suffering. On the contrary, there can be found none, so far as we are capable of understanding its operation, whose design and adaptation are not to produce happiness and good. Death, then, is the appointment of the Divine benevolence; so far from being a curse, it must be a blessing. It is easy to see how enjoyment is extended, how happiness is multiplied by a constant succession of beings. If we could suppose any arrangement by which the waste of life should be suspended, and life should go on increasing in the ordinary ratio, in a quarter of a century every spot of this earth would be crowded to an excess, and universal want and misery would flood the world. But suppose, for there is no end to the suppositions, and many of them extremely absurd, in which the human imagination loves to indulge—suppose only so many to exist as there is room for here; do we not know how much more vivid is the enjoyment of the fresh, the youthful, those who are just entering upon the career of life, than of the old, and those whose sensibility has become blunted by use, and whose appetite has been long since satiated by indulgence. I refer now to sensible pleasures merely, because I am speaking of the

brute as well as the human races. In a succession of races new capacities are still coming out, and new courses of happiness are to be run by them.

Then, again, is death to be complained of on the part of the Creator? Had we any right to ask a longer continuance of life than God is pleased to grant? Is life no blessing, because we must die? Are friends no blessing, because we cannot have them always? If life is no blessing, why do we complain of dying? I know that a great many perish in infancy, and to a great many life is a course of severe suffering; and yet it seldom happens, even in the most pitiable cases, that there is not a much larger amount of enjoyment than of suffering. It was not the design of the Creator, we have every reason to believe, to kindle life merely that it should be extinguished. In the cases of infants and young children there is seldom much suffering, and no mental pain. Nor have we any grounds to suppose that even in the worst cases of deformity, deficiency, or constitutional disease, it was the intention of the Creator to give pain. We have yet to learn in how many of these cases the shortening of life and protracted sufferings spring from our own fault, folly, neglect, or voluntary ignorance. But setting these cases

aside, we must acknowledge life is adapted to be a blessing. To the prudent and virtuous, it abounds with unnumbered sources of happiness and good; and it yields the purest felicity, when it is made the instrument of happiness and good to others. What good man, faithful to his duty and his conscience, and looking upon the blessings which have fallen to his lot, the alleviations which have been mingled with even his severest sufferings, the contributions which he has been permitted to bring to the public welfare, and the happiness which he has been instrumental in diffusing among others, does not find constant and abundant reason to thank God that he has lived; and even upon the supposition that there were no life beyond the present, would he have any ground whatever, would it not be most ungrateful on his part, to complain that life must have an end?

Again, looking at man as an intellectual and moral being, we must remember the various influences which operate upon him. Habit and prejudice hold a powerful sway over his mind and character. If his mind is clouded or perverted by error, time too often establishes and strengthens it. If he has been the slave of his lower appetites and passions, and his life has been stained by the repetitions of vice, time fixes

these habits, as it were, with iron chains. The moral feelings become more and more blunted and depraved, and, like the demoniac in the Scriptures, the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. There is in many such cases little hope of reformation; there is often none of amendment. What a blessing is death then, if it does no more than put an end to this progress in vice; and if, in respect to the enslaved and perverted mind, it breaks up all these false associations and removes all these corrupt influences, which wholly obstruct its progress here; and, if so it should please God to rekindle this mind hereafter, prepares it to enter fresh, vigorous, and unbiassed, upon a new course of knowledge and virtue.

But, again, who would wish to live here always? I do not mean to undervalue life. I love my friends, my home, my country, the world. I love mankind: would to God they were what they might be! I have complaints enough to make of myself, but I have no complaints to make of life. My blessings, if they had been not a hundredth part of what they have been, would have been, I had almost said, a hundred times more than I deserved; and here I know that I am uttering only the experience of others as well as my own. Many of us have

had to contend with poverty, sickness, disappointments, crosses, bereavements; and have seen many an hour of darkness and sorrow; but what of all that? We deserved them all; and if we had not deserved them all, God saw that we needed them all. Shall we complain of a physician, because his medicines are nauseous and offensive? Shall a child resent the discipline of the most faithful and disinterested parental affection, though it be painful and severe? How ungrateful this would be.

But notwithstanding all this, notwithstanding all there is in life to love and to rejoice in, I find myself coming to an end. I seem to myself to have found out most that is to be found out here. My pleasures and employments have become familiar. They cease therefore to have that vivid interest and excitement with me, which they once had. My powers, even in their best estate, are very unequal to my desires; and many of the best desires of my soul remain unsatisfied. There is not room enough for their expansion. There is not to be found on earth that which will entirely satisfy the impatient longings of the mind. The soul here is hemmed in, imprisoned like the caged bird, and striking against his wires, pants like him to breathe the wild air of his native forests, and bask in the

pure sunshine of the open heavens. Yes, there are within the mind, burning and quenchless aspirations, after progress, improvement, more knowledge, more light; after that which we are conscious of our inability here to reach, after that which this world in all its fulness can never supply. We seek after something higher and far better than this earth affords, or our present powers can grasp,—we would not therefore live here always. When the purposes of this life are answered, and our earthly nature has run its course, why should we wish to remain? This reconciles us to death; as the child at school is ready, on his probation, to ascend from a lower to a higher class.

In these earnest desires after further progress; in these aspirations of the soul after other and higher attainments, we see a strong omen and indication of a future life. These desires and aspirations are all natural, natural to every pure mind, which has risen above the slavery of sense, and accustomed itself to reflection. Why should God have implanted such desires, had he not intended to gratify them? and why should they not be gratified?

But they are not left without his express sanction. “That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.” Death then is the

foundation, and the passage to life. We do not pretend that vegetable life furnishes any exact analogy to spiritual life. We do not see, because a new plant springs from the perishing seed, that therefore a new form of animal life will spring out of these mouldering relics. We do not perceive, because, in the language of the Scriptures, "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; and because there is one flesh of men, another of fishes, and another of birds," that therefore the human being is to survive the grave; but in these things we see changes and varieties of forms of existence and life, as extraordinary as any, through which, upon the supposition of a future life, the human existence is destined to pass; and which demonstrate the almighty power of God to give life and being under any form which he may choose.

These considerations may in some measure reconcile the reflecting mind to death. It comes by the appointment of God, and it must be therefore the messenger of his wisdom and love. When the natural term of life seems finished, we should not desire to remain. We retire in our turn, that we may make room for the countless multitudes that are coming after us. We have had ours; they have a right to their turn.

We pass onwards, and other generations succeed us; and thus, how immensely are beings, endued with capacities for happiness, multiplied. Unless it be our own fault, we accomplish the ends of this life; our capacities for further attainment and progress are hemmed in; death introduces us to a wider and boundless sphere for their expansion. Death breaks up the barriers which here obstructed our further progress; and in the unsatisfied capacities of the mind for greater and undefined attainments, and in the ardent desires and aspirations after life and immortality which are irrepressible, and, where not extinguished by sensuality, seem universal, there is an emphatical assurance of the life we are made to desire.

Still, however, too often, in spite of all our philosophy, death will have its terrors; and the man who can look forward to it without any emotion, must have extinguished to a degree the common sensibilities of his nature. The love of life prevails wherever animal life exists. I cannot say that I have not been sometimes ready to welcome death as a benefactor; if it had pleased God, in some miserable and despairing hours, to have sent him to my relief. Death may be preferred to long protracted and acute suffering; to utter helplessness; to fatuity and

loss of reason; and to a dishonour, which often combines sufferings more acute and intense than any to which our physical nature may be doomed. The love of life may for various reasons be less strong in some minds than in others; but it is a rare case, save where positive disease has invaded and deranged the powers of the mind, that an attachment to life can be wholly extinguished. The love of life, and consequently the dread of death, are instinctive impulses, which make a part of the constitution of all animals; and are designed, in the benevolence of the Creator, to stimulate them to the exertion of powers necessary to sustain life, and to the avoidance of perils by which it is constantly endangered. If it were not found as it is, few would survive the first years, I may say, the first days, of infancy, and all animated existences would be blotted out of creation. These instinctive impulses do their office for the brute creation through the whole of *their* being. In man, reflection presently takes the place of instinct; and the love of life becomes an intellectual and a moral sentiment. Man loves life, because there is much in it to love; because of friends and the endearments of social and domestic attachments; because it abounds with enjoyments; because it is full of interest; because it gives employ-

ment to all his faculties; because, if he will be faithful to his duty, it opens before him a continual progress even here towards something better; because it arouses all the activity of his mind, with its objects of curiosity; and because it lures him on continually with golden hopes and promises. These circumstances create a healthful attachment to life altogether favourable to virtue, and excite a corresponding fear of death.

But let us examine this sentiment of the fear of death more closely, and consider it both in reference to ourselves, and in reference to what we feel in this case in respect to others who are dear to us, or in whom we take an interest.

When old age has made long advances upon us; when the limbs stagger under his weight, and the intellectual light grows dim, and quivers in its socket; when the powers of enjoyment are gone, and the power of usefulness has ceased; when the judgment can no longer hold its scales even, and the records of memory become a confused and illegible mass, and man stands out only a fragment or shadow of his former self, —the work of earth seems finished, and we acquiesce in the removal; as, after the harvest is ripened, and the fruit gathered, we see without emotion the plants of the field perish.

It is otherwise when death arrests the middle-aged and the youthful in the midst of their usefulness, in the flower of promise, in the golden sunshine of hope. We are struck dumb to see men struck down at a time when their presence seems most needed; when their useful schemes are in the very process of accomplishment, and when the relations of life are multiplied in every direction, and the ties which bind such individuals to the community are never stronger. When in such circumstances the terrible blow falls, the shock is felt in astounding force through a wide circle.

There are other cases of deep affliction and distress. When Jesus approached the city of Nain, He met the bier of a young man; and he was the only son of a widowed mother; perhaps her whole dependence, her joy, her pride—the only treasure which she felt she had in life; his virtuous character and filial affection the precious gems which she wore in her bosom, and which quickened every pulsation of her heart. On another occasion there came to Jesus a centurion, beseeching him to come and lay his hands upon his daughter, his only child, for she lay a-dying. With what emotions that father's heart was then struggling, how difficult would it be for any pen to describe! These are

not rare instances of the terrible triumphs of death. It often seems to me, when I recal the events of the last thirty years, that hundreds and hundreds of these gay and happy beings, with hearts beating with the buoyant expectations and hopes of youthful ambition, crowd around my delighted vision only to mock me with the terrible conviction that they are the mere shadows of what has been, and can no longer hear my voice nor grasp my hand, nor return even the faintest token of recognition.

The triumphs of death seem sometimes, if possible, more unseasonable than even these. There are those who seem born only to die; who are summoned away at the very breaking of the day of life to them; who are plucked from the arms of maternal affection ere yet they have clasped them. There are those who have learnt to charm us by their childish prattle, and to engage our hearts by their gentle affections, by their opening intelligence, by their rapid improvements, by their singular beauty, and by the brilliancy of promise, which glitters around them. When death takes such a lamb from the fold, tears away such a nestling from the bosom of love, and, when as yet the ruddy tints of life have hardly faded on the cheek, requires us to commit an object so lovely, even in its shroud,

to the grave, I scarcely know what severer duty can be required, or with what new terrors death can be clothed.

Now it is not the severity of disappointment, nor the breaking up of our affections alone, which give asperity to our sufferings; but it is, in truth, besides these, the mysteriousness of such dispensations which distresses and confounds us.

It is, indeed, a mystery to a great degree insoluble to human sagacity. There will be found throughout the whole of nature a constant and prodigal waste of life. Vast multitudes perish in an unformed state, and countless myriads and myriads of living beings fail entirely of arriving at the maturity and perfection for which they were evidently intended. This remarkable phenomenon often arrests the attention of the reflecting; but in respect to the vegetable and brute creation, with whom we have little or no sympathy, we see it without concern. It is far otherwise with beings who share our own nature; who are a part of ourselves; who have intelligent and moral constitutions, and all those refined affections, sentiments, attributes, and moral elements, which seem like emanations from the Divinity, and elevate them to the highest rank in the scale of being. We feel

in these cases confounded, as though the end of their creation were not answered; the design were frustrated; and an incompleteness and imperfection in the case, not in keeping with the completeness and perfection which prevail in other departments of nature, present themselves and seem incompatible, in some measure, with the power and wisdom of the Being who reigns over all.

But such conclusions would be premature and unreasonable. The difficulties in the case must arise wholly from our ignorance, and the limitation and imperfection of our vision. The child of a year old, reposing in his mother's arms, knows as little of life as we do of the state into which death introduces us. The world around us is full of mysteries, which mock our investigation. The fructification of a seed, the quickening of an egg, the various transformations through which many of the insect tribes pass in their ephemeral existence, and the developments of life in every case, are all impenetrable mysteries, utterly confounding to human sagacity. Our ignorance does not affect the facts, nor abate the marvellous beauty and wisdom of these arrangements. Now, I do not presume to say that the changes of death in the human race are at all analogous to any of these changes.

To say that, would imply a presumption of knowledge on our part, where we know absolutely nothing; but our ignorance is no more an argument against the wisdom or benevolence of the arrangement, and the kind ulterior designs to be answered by it, in the one case, than in the other. Of this we may be certain, that no such thing as accident can exist in the works of God, or the arrangements of the Divine Providence. Philosophy has long since demonstrated, in respect to what we call the system of nature, that any suspension or interruption of its great laws, or anything like what we call accident, intermingling in their operation, and disturbing their adjusted balance of powers and forces, would at once throw every thing into confusion, and bring universal ruin. There is reason to conclude that, in every department of nature where life exists and where death triumphs, there is always design, and no accident; and, however ignorant we may be, however incompetent to solve the problem, that design cannot be other than the perfection of wisdom. In the darkness, therefore, which appertains to the grave, we must acquiesce on the grounds of our own ignorance, but without the slightest distrust of the unerring wisdom of the appointment.

But death, in the next place, is terrible as the breaking up of our affections, and the severance of the nearest and dearest ties. It is terrible to put away from us what is beautiful, lovely, and dear to us; what we leaned upon; what constituted our main dependence and our chief hopes; what was the centre of attraction to us. It is painful to find our friends one after another leaving us; and to experience, as it were, a solitude in the midst of society.

Yet it is obvious that the very circumstances which now, in fact, constitute and aggravate our grief, are those from which all our happiness sprung; and which constituted the basis of all our attachments. We mourn the removal of friends and children, because we loved them. We loved them, because they were lovely; because of their graces and their virtues; their beauty, affection, usefulness, and moral worth. Now would we, in order that we might have been saved the grief and anguish of parting with them, have preferred that they should have been without these causes and occasions of attraction and attachment? We must not ask for impossibilities. Because, in the nature of things, we could not lose those whom we love without suffering for it; and suffering the more in proportion as we loved them; and loving them the

more in proportion as they were lovely, we must not charge God with unkindness, in the suffering which their death occasions. It is impossible that it should be otherwise than it is. Separate from every other consideration, let us suppose all these tender affections to become extinct, so that we might not suffer when they are taken away; whence should we then look for those kind offices, and assiduous, devoted, and untiring attentions and services, which the sick and dying so absolutely demand at the hands of those who are called to watch at their sick beds, and to close their fading eyes?

These, however, I am aware are comparatively cold and negative consolations. They may lead the reflecting mind to an undoubting and calm acquiescence in the appointment of death; but the acting heart yearns after something more positive and substantial. This, I think, can only be found in the Gospel. The suggestions of reason and philosophy afford a strong expectation and hope of a future life; but the Gospel alone gives confirmation to these hopes and expectations.

If I were asked where I should go for any assurance to my hopes, I could only answer with Peter, "with Jesus alone are the words of eternal life." Whatever obscurity may prevail, in regard

to any other teachings or doctrines of the Gospel, there is none here. The certainty of a future life stands out prominently in every page of the New Testament. Jesus constantly asserted it. He died, and rose again, to confirm it. The apostles and all the early disciples lived upon the hopes and the assurance of it. St. Paul says, in the depth of his feelings, "he should choose to be absent from the body that he might be present with the Lord; and that while for him, to live is Christ, to die would be gain."

The Gospel then solves the great problem of death, which had so long distressed the anxious inquiries, and laid like a stone upon the hearts of men—both simple and wise, ignorant and learned, peasant and philosopher. Death is not the termination of our being; it is but a stage in our existence; it is only the passage to a new life. What an immense boon is conferred in this assurance; and for what on earth would we exchange this expectation?

An affectionate and a natural curiosity impatiently asks for more light on a subject which so entirely absorbs all the thoughts and affections of the bereaved. What is the change which death produces? What is the state into which it introduces us? Here, indeed, revelation is not wholly silent, but it is not full, nor

explicit. It has not pleased God as yet to satisfy or answer the thousand inquiries that spring up in the affectionate heart.

The Gospel is not, however, without hints or intimations, which are full of interest. Our Saviour spoke of the patriarchs as still living; for he says, that "all live unto God." Our departed friends then still live with God. The death of the body has not extinguished the fires of the soul. Perhaps the removal of this incumbrance has served only to produce a brighter flame. Death, then, is not the destruction of the conscious existence, the never dying spirit; but like the beautiful chrysalis emerging with its glittering wings from its silken shroud, the grave becomes the passage to a new life.*

* I have often meditated on the account given of what is called the Transfiguration of Jesus in the Mount, when he took with him his two disciples, Peter and John; and when, it is said, that Moses and Elias appeared and conversed with him. I have met with no satisfactory explanation of this account; and it may not be well-judged to press an interpretation of a passage so difficult and obscure. Elias, we know, is represented in the Old Testament as having been suddenly translated without dying; and of Moses, it is said, that his sepulchre was never found,—he retired from the sight of the people into the Mount, and was seen no more. We may infer from this account, that he was removed, like the prophet, without dying.

Now the object of Jesus's death and resurrection was to give a positive and demonstrative proof of the doctrine of a future

But there is another lesson which the Gospel emphatically teaches. God has that in store for us which is infinitely better than anything which we have known here. Are the pleasures of the senses, the charms of the affections, the delights of progress, the gratifications of our curiosity, great here,—they shall all be infinitely continued, enlarged, purified, and elevated hereafter.

I can imagine the winged spirit now bursting from its prison-house, and in its upward flight seeking its native heaven. I am dazzled with the splendour of its burnished wings; I am life, which he expressly taught. The object of the Transfiguration was not only to strengthen Jesus for the endurance of his trials, but likewise to give to the disciples a glimpse of what a future life is to be; an example of a glorified body, which they had in the appearance of Moses and Elias. If this were so, there can be no longer any room for that interesting question, which so often comes up, and so deeply agitates many affectionate bosoms, whether they shall recognise their friends in a future life? for here were Moses and Elias, who had passed into the glorified state, seen and perfectly recognised as Moses and Elias. Without pressing the interpretation of this curious portion of the Scriptures too closely, it presents likewise another interesting thought;—here were the departed ministering to those who were still on earth: and what inference is more obvious than that there still prevails, with those who are gone, a strong interest and sympathy in the condition and fortunes of those whom they have left behind. This is a charming, a consoling, an elevating thought. It is not unreasonable to indulge it; and its moral influences cannot be otherwise than beneficial.

charmed with the melody of its notes of praise. I see it on its way joining the Cherubim and Seraphim which surround the throne of the Divine Glory, and mingling its exalted sympathies with the perfected spirits of the just. I mark its rapturous welcome as it meets again the once-loved on earth, and pours out its delightful recognition of a parent, a child, a friend, whom last it saw shrouded in death, but now beholds resplendent in robes of light. I perceive its heavings of ecstasy, as it mingles with the wise and good of other lands and other times. I mark its radiant progress, as it floats still higher and higher in the regions of unmixed light, basks in the sunshine of God's immediate presence, and slakes its thirst at the inexhaustible fountain of all wisdom, love, and holiness. I see it on its celestial way far above the regions of sin and death; and entering upon a progress in knowledge and goodness commensurate only with its own immortality. I dare not trust myself to follow it in its farther flight. These you will say are only the visions of the imagination, the illusions of poetry! Be it so; yet they must fall infinitely short of the glorious realities; for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that

love Him. Is not this enough? Can we not now say, "Death where is thy sting! Grave where is thy victory!"

Let the grave then no longer terrify. You must yield a while to the weakness of nature; but let a faith, thus sanctioned and sustained, triumph over every other sentiment. Visit the graves of those whom you love; not to indulge repinings, but to exalt and strengthen your hopes. Those who have departed from you are still in the hands of the Being who loves all his children with an affection far stronger than the love of an earthly parent. Make their graves beautiful,—adorn them with the earliest blossoms of spring and the latest flowers of autumn; and while the winding-sheet of winter wraps the spot where you last took leave of them on earth in radiant whiteness, remember that they now shine in robes whiter than the unspotted fleece which covers their earthly resting-place, and dwell in those heavenly fields where flowers bloom with an unfading lustre, and the reign of life and beauty is eternal.

The appearances of death, painful and alarming as they may be, to our weak nature, need not terrify us; for what is impossible to Him who can quicken the dried kernel or seed in the earth, giving it such a body as it pleases Him to

bestow, and cause that from this seed shall rise the beautiful plant with its shining foliage and its healthful and delicious fruit.

That which is sown in the weakness of mortality shall be raised in the power of an endless life. We commit the precious remains of those who were as dear to us as our own lives to their last earthly resting-place; but, while memory holds its throne in the heart, there will remain the precious remembrances of their purity and usefulness, their kindness and affection, and all that made them so dear to us. While that which is mortal perishes, that which is moral remains. Over this, death has no power; these are the imperishable elements of the soul, and are to endure as long as that Infinite Being shall endure, who made man in his own image; and in his moral nature destined him to share in his own immortality.

In the prospects which his faith and hopes presented to his mind, St. Paul seems to rise above all fear of death; and exclaims, in tones of sublime moral triumph, "O Grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting!" Perhaps this should be always the effect of a true and elevated Christian faith; yet few of us, in reference to this great event, are able to adopt any other than the silent language of submission.

or despair. The true triumphs of the mind consist in its superiority over the accidents of the body; and in sentiments, views, and hopes, which rob death of its power to produce inconsolable distress; and enable us to see the grave no longer shrouded in darkness, but radiant with the bow of promise and hope. The mind is in a degree the creature of discipline. It may be trained to the calm endurance of pains and evils, which would seem almost beyond the power of human nature to sustain. I admit that, in a degree, fortitude is an attribute of the physical constitution. It depends somewhat upon health, temperament, muscular strength, and energy. There is a hardness of nature, an insensibility to outward sufferings, to which men are sometimes formed by early exposure and severe physical suffering; so that whatever they endure, no complaint and no signs of suffering are allowed to escape them. This was deemed the perfection of wisdom with a well-known sect of ancient philosophers. But this is not the fortitude, nor the spirit of triumph over outward circumstances, to which the mind is brought under the best influences of religion. The training of the mind, to which I refer, is that in which, under the calm convictions of reason and the power of religious faith and hope, it

becomes not insensible to pain and suffering, but capable of enduring them without complaint; and of acquiescing in them, as the just, righteous, and paternal discipline of heaven; and of meeting them, and even death itself, with resignation, with hope, and even with a hearty and sublime welcome. No person who has had any considerable experience of life, can question the need and inexpressible value of such an attainment; the felicity of this Christian philosophy, which will enable him to look upon the world as a traveller on the mountain looks down on the scenes below him. While clouds and darkness float around its base, and the hoarse voice of the storm is heard from beneath, he is elevated above its power, and enjoys the serene heavens and the clear and the calm sunshine.

PRAYERS.

I. PRAYER UNDER THE DEATH OF A NEAR FRIEND.

O God! I would approach Thee as my only refuge in the time of my affliction; as the only source of consolation under my sorrows, and of support under my weakness. I would come emboldened by the assurance, and encouraged by the experience, which I have had, every day and hour of my life, of thy kindness and mercy. I am oppressed with grief. Merciful God, comfort me! my heart is wrung with anguish; pity me, pity me! O my God; and assuage the bleeding wounds.

Thou hast seen fit to take from me the friend upon whom my affections rested, with an intensity known only to thine eye. Sickness has wasted *him*, and death has removed *him* from my embraces. Help me, O my God, under this deep affliction, to bear it as I should, with fortitude, with hope, with unshaken trust in Thee, and with entire resignation. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it! I would not have loved *him* less, but I would love Thee more; and whether by suc-

cesses or disappointments, by joys or sorrows, by health or sickness, by acquisitions or bereavements, Thou art teaching me my entire dependence, may the effect be to draw me nearer to Thyself, and to absorb my will entirely in thine.

Thy will be done. Thy will is wholly righteous. Thy purposes are all kind and merciful. Thou dost not afflict thy creatures without some wise and benevolent end. Whatever darkness to my narrow and partial view may obscure thy designs, and render thy dispensations unsearchable, suffer me not for a moment to distrust thy wisdom and unmixed goodness. I am thy child. I would cling to Thee continually with a stronger filial duty and love; and I would cast myself entirely upon thy paternal affection. Have mercy upon me, O my God, have mercy upon me; and let me not in this hour of trial sink under my burden.

I would not be unmindful of thy goodness. May no sorrow to which I may be subjected shut from my sight the blessings which I have received at thy hands. The friend who is removed from me, was the gift of thy love. The virtues which endeared *him* to me, the graces which won my affections, all the kindness which I received from *him*, all the pleasure which I found in *his* society, and all that sacred

love which bound up *his* soul with mine, and made *him* dearer to me than any earthly object, came all from thy goodness, who hast made us to love and to serve each other; who settest the solitary in families, and hast formed our hearts for the interchange of kind and holy affections. I would pour out my soul before Thee in thanksgivings for all which I have enjoyed, and I would entreat Thee to give me more and more strength to bear the privation of what was so dear to me.

I would bow my head before Thee in calm submission to thine appointments. O my God, suffer no complaint to escape my lips; still every murmur within my heart. Teach me to bear with fortitude whatever may be laid upon me; and enable me to prove my affection for the dead, by a more assiduous and faithful discharge of my duties to the living, I have all need of thy mercy. Under a profound conviction of my unworthiness, I lament my imperfections and sins. My only hope is in thy mercy. To that mercy thy blessed Son Jesus has directed me; and to that I fly for forgiveness and succour. Impress my heart more and more deeply with the uncertainty of life, with the shortness of time, with a deep conviction of my own responsibility, with a sense of my duty to

Thee and to my fellow men, and with the necessity while I live of living to some useful and good end. Permit me not to waste or to abuse my talents; to neglect or to misuse any means or opportunity of doing good.

May I become more and more prepared for my own departure by an increased fidelity and diligence in the performance of my duty. In thy mercy, may I rejoin at last the friends whom thy providence has removed, in that blessed world where all tears shall be wiped away; where death can never come; and where virtuous affections will be eternal. This, O God, I humbly beg in the name of that blessed Saviour, whose patience and resignation I would follow, whose promises inspire my hopes, and whose resurrection gives me the assurance of immortality. Amen.

II. PRAYER UNDER THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

O God, father, guardian, and friend of all Thy creatures, permit me to spread my sorrows before Thee, and to ask the support which my weakness demands. Under the affliction which presses upon me, grant me consolation; and permit no thought or feeling to stir within me, and no word or act to escape me, inconsistent with an entire confidence in thy wisdom to discern, and in thy kindness to do that only which is best. With myself, with all that I call mine, and all that my heart holds dear, may thy will be done.

It hath pleased Thee, O God, to take from me my dear child, in the midst of promise and hope, and to pluck the flower in its very opening. The ties which bind us to each other, are of thine appointment; the affection which we feel for our children, is inspired by Thee. When these ties are broken, and the objects of this affection are removed from us, pity our grief and anguish, we beseech Thee, and grant us consolation. Thou givest and Thou takest away; it is not for me to claim exemption from the universal lot. In the affection which we

feel for our children, may we recognise thy love; and may the intense kindness and devotion with which we regard them, assure us more and more of thy love, O Thou who art our Father and the Father of our offspring.

In this deep affliction, in this hour of sad disappointment and grief, may I be sustained. My trust is in Thee only. When the earthly props of my dependence fail, may I feel more and more the necessity and privilege of commending myself to thy care, O Thou who alone art able to keep me from falling. Compassionate my weakness, forgive the excess of my grief, pity, merciful God, the anguish of my bleeding affections and disappointed hopes; but in the sorrow which overwhelms me permit me not to lose the possession of myself. Give me fortitude and courage, and strength, to perform my duties to the dead and to the living.

We are compelled to quit our hold upon objects so dear to us, but they are safe in thy keeping. We commit them to their last earthly repose, persuaded that Thou watchest over their sleep; and in the sure and certain hope, that they shall wake to an immortal life, and the garments of death be exchanged for the robes of light. We rejoice in the blessed expectation that we shall meet and embrace each other in

that heavenly state, where sickness and grief, and sin and death, cannot follow us.

What thanks can I render to Thee for the Gospel of Christ ; and for the assurance which his teaching gives, and his resurrection confirms, of an immortal life ! Increase my faith more and more ; strengthen and elevate my hopes ; and may the departure of those whom I love, serve to reconcile me to my own destiny, and to make me ready for the summons which awaits myself.

O my God and Father, am I not thine, and is not all I possess thine ? I will resign myself, and all I hold dear, to thy wise and merciful disposal, and inspire me I beseech Thee with an unfaltering submission to thy will. Amen.

III. PRAYER FOR SUBMISSION TO THE WILL
OF GOD.

O God, who reignest supreme throughout the universe, and whose care and dominion embrace alike all beings and all worlds, I would express before Thee my humble duty and adoration. The creature of thy power, I would thank Thee for the gift of life; the object of thy constant and merciful providence, I would gratefully acknowledge the kindness which I have experienced; the subject of thy government, I would render a willing and constant obedience to all thy commands. I would withdraw myself from no trial to which Thou art pleased to subject me. I would shrink from no sacrifice which Thou seest fit to require. I would humbly submit to thy disposal, all that I possess; the objects which are most dear to me, all that I have reason to hope, all that I may have any grounds to fear. Confiding in thy wisdom, as that alone which can discern what is best for me, and in thy power to effect all thy purposes, and in thy love and kindness to seek nothing but ultimate and unmixed good for thy creatures, with my whole heart I would pray that thy will may be done. Strengthen

me by the principles and hopes of the Gospel ; and may the example of Jesus in his sufferings inspire in me, in my humble measure, a like courage, fortitude, patience, and resignation.

Thy nature, O God, is wholly love. Thy purposes all are wise and benevolent. May no vain regrets disturb my tranquillity ; no doubts nor distrust mingle with my faith. May my life be consecrated to Thee in humble duty, and my whole heart be given up to Thee in grateful affection, in filial confidence, and in entire and unreserved submission. Amen.

IV. PRAYER FOR ANOTHER ON THE NEAR
APPROACH OF DEATH.

O God, whose listening ear is never turned away from the sighs of the afflicted, and who art full of compassion for the weakness and frailty of thy children on earth, in this painful hour of trial, look upon me in mercy. Have compassion upon my dear [*friend, child,* parent, brother, sister*] now closing *his* eyes upon every thing that is earthly, to wake only upon that which is beyond the grave. *May his reason be sustained, and his whole soul be lifted up to Thee in affection and hope. May he experience the support and consolation of thy conscious presence. May he be consoled under the assurance that death as well as life, is the appointment of thy benevolence and wisdom, and feel an entire security in thy protection and love.*

While he looks back upon a life crowded with imperfections, defects, and sins, may he be comforted by the words of that blessed Saviour, who came to seek and to save that which was perishing. Save him from distressing pains; enable him

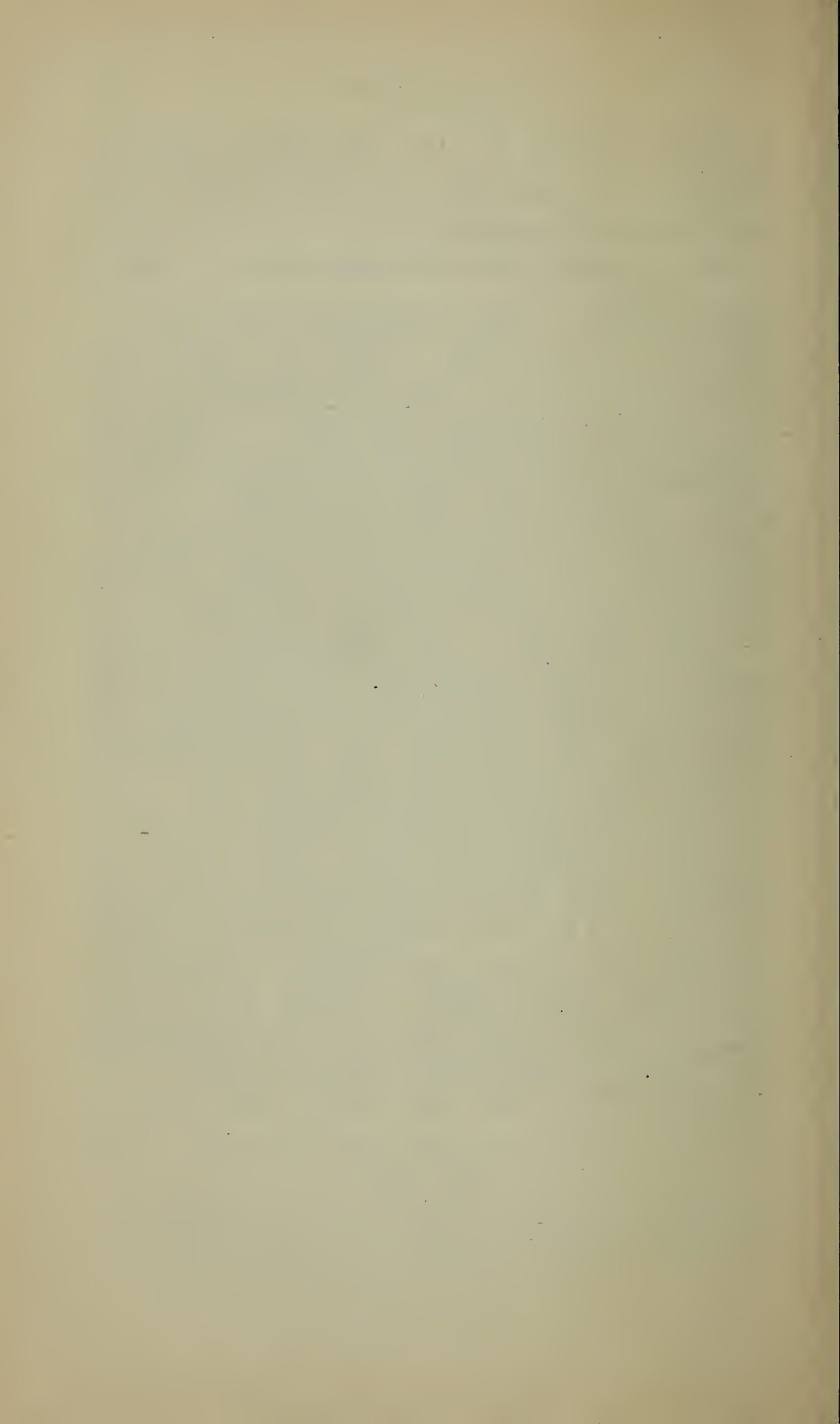
* This prayer is suited to the case of a child, by leaving out the portions in *Italics*; and though single prayers, all of them, as is obvious, may be easily adapted to a joint or social service, by a mere change of person.

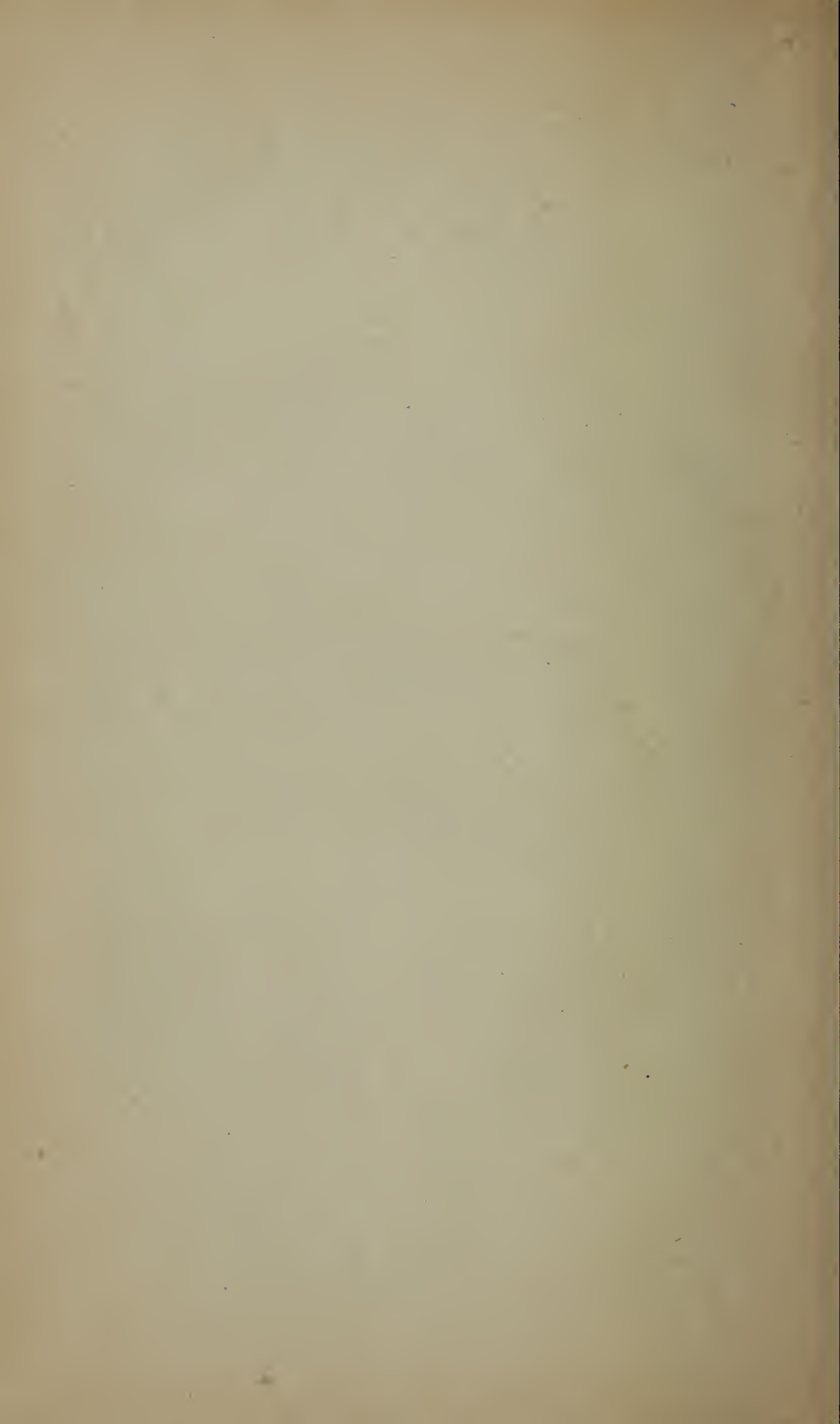
to possess himself in this trying hour ; brighten his hopes of a future life, and sustain his anxious mind with Divine peace.

Strengthen us all under the duties to which we are called. May we not falter, nor be overcome in this bitter trial. Make us grateful for every opportunity of shewing kindness, and, in any way, of alleviating the pains or comforting the heart of our dear [*friend, child, parent, brother, sister*]; and may the going out of the light of life on earth be only preparatory to its rekindling in that blessed world to which Jesus has directed our faith and hopes. In thine infinite mercy, when our earthly pilgrimage has ended, may we be again united with the dear friends who have gone before us, and those who shall come after us, in a better and an immortal life.

O God, pity and assuage our griefs. Suffer not even death itself to terrify us; but give us, we beseech Thee, the complete victory of Christian faith and hope, over death and the grave. Our hopes rest on Thee. O God, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us; and comfort us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE END.





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